DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 789 IR 008 870

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TITLE Accountability, Competency, and Non-Teaching Faculty.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Competence; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Faculty Evaluation; Library Administration; Media Selection; *Media Specialists; *Models; *School Libraries

ABSTRACT

This report illustrates the steps in the development of an evaluative model for non-teaching faculty, using the school media specialist as an example. The model measures how the professional applies knowledge of a given content area to improve learning in a particular school situation, and consists of three parts: (1) documentation developed by the media specialist (or other non-teaching faculty) and presented in a portfolio, (2) interview questions for randomly selected school personnel and students, and (3) a list of items to be checked by observations. The effectiveness of the media specialist would be evaluated in the areas of media selection, management of the media program, and utilization of media resources by faculty and students. While the specifics of the model would change for other non-teaching faculty, the basic components are designed to evaluate solely those skills that influence the effectiveness of the program for which he or she is responsible. (FM)

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ED192789

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ACCOUNTABILITY, COMPETENCY, AND NON-TEACHING FACULTY

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Accountability, Competency, and Non-Teaching Faculty

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In the present age of accountability, the professional behaviors of teaching faculty have not gone unnoticed nor undefined. Research has been conducted to identify those competencies deemed necessary for successful management of classroom instruction. While debate may remain on the legality, the feasibility or even the possibility of measuring individual teaching performance against such a list of competencies, actually little debate remains on the competencies themselves. Neither the same scrutiny nor the same agreement has been applied to the behaviors of those minority groups of faculty not performing in the classroom. This group contains administrators, media specialists, and counselors. These groups cannot have their lesson plans checked; it is more difficult to observe their management of small and large groups; nor are they held responsible for the test scores of the students.

Should the behavior of these groups go unobserved or undefined? Probably not, for as budgets tighten it may well prove unwise for any group to remain outside of the accountability arena. Available monies may well gravitate toward those able to demonstrate they are meeting competency criteria. (Indeed, this movement may well be underway. The last few years have seen the reduction of both counselors and media specialists in the school.)

One alternative would be to proceed on the assumption that all certified personnel working in the schools can be defined as teachers and have passed through some kind of teacher training. The same criteria could then be applied to all willy-nilly, whether relevant to their present responsibilities or not. While such an assumption might be defended philosophically it is

doubtful if its application would lead to improvement of services. If such improvement is the desired product alternative evaluative instruments must be developed to measure the performance of those responsible for such services.

It is the purpose of this paper to present the steps in development of such an evaluative model for non-teaching faculty, using the school media specialist as an example. As do counselors and principals, media specialist encounter a great deal of confusion about their role on the part of students and teachers. Also like the others, the media specialist can cite a number of documents that delinate their professional competencies. While specific examples in this paper apply to the media specialist the methodology should be applicable for evaluation of any similiar non-teaching faculty.

The initial step in development of such an evaluative instrument is an examination of professional documents developed for the field. The evaluative documents that exist in the library-media field tend to concentrate on observable quantative attributes of the media center itself--i.e., number of print and non-print materials available, seating capacity, level of staffing. Such evaluation has tended to shift attention from the behaviors of the media specialist to the facility itself. (Indeed, while all accreditation instruments call for a media center, a media specialist to run it is not always required.) While such criteria have encouraged collection and facility development, it has not encouraged utilization. Much the same problem has existed with building level principals -- it has proven much easier to evaluate them in terms of the efficiency of the building rather than the program provided therein.

The media specialist (also like principals) spends a fairly unstructured day -- responding to a variety of demands as they arise, thus making evaluation more of a challenge. However, the last few years have seen efforts on part of the profession to incorporate into these documents some description of the activities of the media specialists.

The most important of these documents are Media Programs District and School 1971, published by the American Association of School Librarian; Evaluation Criteria, 5th edition, published by the National Study of School Evaluation 1978 and used by the regional accrediting associations which covers the fifty states; and finally Certification Model for Professional School Media Personnel, published by the American Association of School Librarian in 1975.

While these publications provide valuable background materials in the design of a measurement instrument, they cannot serve the purpose themselves. Activities are not listed in behavioral terms and are thus impossible to measure; for example, verbs used are "reflects, provides, aids, plans, recommends, invites." As educators have long been aware such terms are useless in providing a practical measure of how people are performing. Furthermore, there is no connection made between activities described and successful operation of the center; nor is there any distinction made between "must do" activities and "nice to do" ones. Examples include, "Provides a humanistic environment for learning," "applies principals of school law to the administration of the media program," "reflects an active awareness of current developments in education." Finally no practical plans are offered by which these documents may actually be used for evaluation purposes. It was, therefore, the purpose of this paper to overcome these weaknesses and provide a practical model for development of an evaluative instrument. This model would deal specifically with school media specialists, but the same steps of development could be followed with other non-teaching faculty in the schools.

It was assumed that the purpose of the model should not be to measure knowledge of content, but how knowledge of content is applied by the professional to improve learning in a particular school situation. The professional should thus have at least two years of service before being evaluated. Items outside

the control of the professional should not be included. The media specialists should not, for example, be held responsible for staffing levels and budget if these are district policy. The model should be designed to be effectively utilized by any educator responsible for evaluation of school programs and should not involve lengthy, elaborate and expensive procedures.

Principals, supervisors, teachers, or parents could apply the model effectively. Evaluation would become a process that is related to the situation at hand, not an elaborate, expensive procedure that occurs infrequently and has little relation to the particular situation. Finally, the media specialist would have documentation to answer that query so often posed to non-teaching faculty, "And what exactly is it that you do all day?" Evaluation will become a learning process for both evaluator and those being evaluated, non-teaching faculty will be able to demonstrate their effectiveness, and beginning professionals will have guidelines to aid them in "getting it all together."

The model chosen to meet this criteria was the following three part model.

(1) Documentation developed by the media specialist and presented in a portfolio. Such documentation itself would improve performance for the media specialist would have defined goals to work toward.

(2) Interview questions for randomly selected school personnel and students. If the interview format was impractical, written answers could be substituted. A media program cannot be judged effective unless its users perceive it as such.

(3) A list of items to be checked by observations. Observation can reveal effectiveness of organization and utilization.

The next step was identification of the essentials of an effective media program. A review of the literature revealed agreement that these were selection of a strong media collection that meets the needs of students and faculty; efficient management that blends procedure personnel and materials of

the program to meet the goals and objectives of the school and active utilization of media resources by faculty and students.

It was in these areas and these areas only, therefore, that the effectiveness of the media specialist would be measured.

The next step in the procedure would be to develop specific items for evaluation -- items that would relate directly to the performance of the media in selection, utilization and organization. It is not the purpose of this paper to present an entire evaluative package, but rather to outline the procedures followed in such development. However, such an evaluation package was developed and the following presents the methodology with selected samples.

SELECTION

Selection of print and non-print collection, as well as proper equipment, is the responsibility of the media specialists. Such a collection must reflect the needs of the specific school population served and meet their reading level, socio-economic background, vocational and recreational needs. The collection must also reflect the curriculum of the school and provide resources for the teacher. For a successful media program it is essential that the media specialists be skilled at selection.

Portfolio. Items presented in the portfolio must reflect the above and should include the following:

(1) Criteria for selection of material for the media center developed for a self study document of the school such as National Study. For example, if such document reveals that eighty percent of the school population enters the work force or trade school upon high school graduation, the criteria for selection should reflect that, i.e., "A majority of vocational, general non-fiction and recreational materials selected reflect needs, concerns, and interest of the work-day world a minority of the materials selected are for the college bound."

(2) A list of bibliographies, periodicals, and catalogs used to select materials should reflect support of the curriculum and include publication of such groups as National Council of Teacher of Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Science as well as generalized standard catalogs.

(3) Evidence that provisions are made for faculty, students and community to have input into the selection. Such evidence might include evidence of selection workshops held, existence of a selection advisory committee, needs assessments conducted, a weeding policy involving faculty.

Interview Questions.

Oral or wirtten responses would depend on age of students, organization of school or procedure of evaluation. Questions would be designed to find out if students and faculty did consider that they had adequate input into selection of material and equipment, and that the evidence provided in the portfolio was indeed true.

Observation.

The evaluator could find out by observation such information as, "Is learning material available in a variety of formats? Is the collection best kept relevant by weeding obsolete materials? Does it reflect the criteria stated in the portfolio?"

Completion of a portfolio concerning selection would make the media specialist aware of the needs of those to be served, and would lead to development of criteria to meet their specific needs. By questioning that population, the evaluator would discover if they did perceive their needs as being met. Observation of certain specifics would serve as a further check.

MANAGEMENT

Effective management procedures are the basis for an effective media program and are also the responsibility of the media specialist. Just as effective selection must relate to the specific school population so goals and objectives of the services of the media center must relate to the philosophy and objectives of the school.

Portfolio.

The portfolio should include goals and objectives of the media center and how they relate to the larger goals of the school. For example, if one objective of the school is to aid students to develop a large measure of self discipline and good work habits the objectives of the media center must reflect this. Media center objectives in this case might include providing individual study carrells as 50% of the seating; developing planning schedules with teachers who wish to individualize; providing open access for students to the media center.

Good management practices include job descriptions understood and agreed upon by all parties involved. The portfolio would include job descriptions for the media specialist, as well as aides, clerks, adult and student volunteers; signed by them and the principals.

Good management provides for training and evaluation of employees. Evidence of such would be in the portfolio.

Interview.

Interviews would reveal if the clerks and aides felt they received adequate training and feedback and if they considered that they worked in a positive atmosphere. Questioning the principal would reveal how he rated the media specialist in appropriate areas of budget, supervision and reports. Interviews with students would deal with student access to center, availability of assistance, and general student opinions about the atmosphere.

Observation.

Work flow, scheduling, circulation and equipment procedures could be judged by observation. Developed checklists would be utilized for this purpose.

Media specialist are accused of excessive attention to details of management while ignoring the central purpose of the media center. This form of evaluation would assure that the beginning media specialist would at least work from first principles (goals and objectives of the school) as they developed their management styles and evaluation would be based on effective operation in a peculiar environment.

UTILIZATION

Finally, the extent to which the media resources are actively used by student and faculty in the learning-teaching process (really the heart of the matter) would be evaluated.

Portfolio.

It is the responsibility of the media specialist that faculty and students alike have access to instruction in media skills and equipment operation. The portfolio should, therefore, contain these items.

(1) Evidence that such in-service is planned, provided and evaluated by the media specialist for the faculty.

(2) Lesson plans or other evidence of methods of teaching media skills to students.

(3) Evidence that periodical needs assessment of media needs of students and teachers are conducted and implemented.

Interview Questions.

Questions dealing with utilization would be important and should involve a wide sample of students and teachers. Faculty, for example, would be asked how they find out about materials and equipment; how actively they use the materials; how they rated the media specialist as

a resource person and consultant. Students would be quizzed about their involvement with media center material as far as classwork, leisure reading, or personal problems; how much they find it necessary to rely on the public library and how they rated the instruction they receive in media skills.

Observation.

The observation checklist dealing with utilization would be varied and include the following:

(1) Can the media specialist operate the equipment available in the media center?

(2) Are there well designed learning centers, bulletin boards or display cases that motivate utilization.

(3) Are students well behaved and self-motivated in the media center?

(4) Are bibliographies available?

While an evaluation model developed for other non-teaching faculty would deal with different specifics the model would remain the same. A search of the literature would indicate what characteristics are essential for an effective program, be it counseling, administration, or media services. The three part model would reveal how well the professional was doing in achieving these essentials in a particular school environment, which is really what matters. A period of at least two years before evaluation would allow time for an effective program to be developed if the person was capable of doing so. Many evaluation schemes currently focus on so called professional skills, assuming that these can be demonstrated and judged in a vaccuum (i.e. video tapes of classroom demonstrations, in-basket - out-basket simulation) and applied to any situation. This often leads to an inordinate amount of time spent by

those to be evaluated in developing a portfolio that may reveal their particular skills but have nothing to do with their ability to use these skills for betterment of the school program. This model, attempts to overcome that weakness by evaluating solely those skills that influence the effectiveness of the program. It would also aid the practitioner in developing the necessary skills as they work through the development of goals and objectives for the program, in light of the needs of the particular school where they are involved.

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